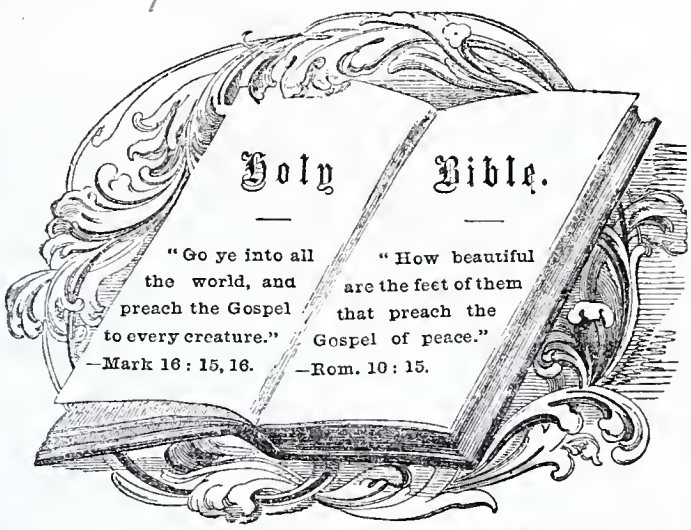
Holy Bible.
"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."
—Mark 16 : 15, 16.
"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace."
—Rom. 10 : 15.

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SERMON VI.

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THE DECLINE OF LIFE; OR, HOW OLD ART THOU?*

"How-old art thou?"—GEN. 47 : 8.

THE scene to which we are here admitted, as spectators, is a presentation at court.

At the drawing room receptions of the British sovereigns, perhaps no more brilliant assemblies could be gathered in all the world. Yet, all seems cold state and ceremony. Hundreds of the noblest of the land, in splendid array, pass in a continual stream before the throne; and borne on by the tide of courtiers, there comes, here and there, the new face of some blushing girl or some ambitious stranger, who, for a moment, is greeted with the customary token of royal recognition, and the exact measure of condescension prescribed by court etiquette, and then the throng of "fair women and brave men"—the *debutante* and the courtier alike—are hurried onward, and the interview with the sovereign is over.

* Preached in the course, in the Academy of Music, January 2, 1859, as a New Year's discourse.

There is something more remarkable, and attractive, and impressive, because more hearty, in the scene before us. It is laid in a royal palace, adorned with all the barbaric magnificence and gloomy grandeur of Egypt, the most ancient, and at that time, the most powerful monarchy in the world. Pharoah and his court are evidently moved with the deepest interest in the group of strangers who are now introduced to the king. They are presented by the prime minister—a youth still, of fair and ruddy aspect, in whose eyes are trembling the tears of filial affection and joy. He leads forward a hoary-headed man, bent, not more with the weight of unusual years, than with the oppression of long-enduring and various sorrow. The presentation is not a mere ceremony. The patriarch and his family are come by the monarch's invitation to reside in his land, blessed with the plenty stored up through the forecast and statesmanship of that old man's best-beloved child, now become the second in rank in the kingdom, the favorite and most trusted servant of the throne.

And how interesting to Jacob and to Joseph was the hour when this aged father was presented to Pharoah by this dutiful son. Through what changes both of them had passed! And now, after the lapse of years, during which the father had mourned for his beloved child as dead, that betrayed and exiled son is restored to his arms, and the unnatural, but now penitent and reconciled, brethren of Joseph, are come to share the wonderful prosperity which enabled him to provide an asylum for his family, under the protection of the powerful monarch in whose presence they stand reünited.

The venerable man courteously renders to Pharoah the salutations which became the introduction, does homage to the sovereign, and, with gratitude due to his benefactor, he supplicates the blessing of the God of Israel upon the king and upon his land. On the other hand, the monarch is struck with surprise and admiration, by the aspect of the venerable stranger. And, while he respected his years, it was probably to set him at his ease, that he opened a conversation with him, by putting a very natural, yet to really aged persons, not an unwelcome question: "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?"

May not this question be properly brought home to us?

Another year has just passed over our heads. We have enjoyed those festive interviews, and exchanged those friendly salutations which are customary at the inauguration of a "New Year." But should there not be serious reflection on the flight of time? The season marks it. It is full of admonition, and while its quick recurrence reminds us that "God requireth that which is past," its own momentous importance may add solemnity to the inquiry:

How old art THOU?

Ponder it in your own hearts. Not only those who have begun

to decline in the journey of life, but the youth, who looking forward with eager excitement, anticipate with confident hilarity, the prospect of many years to come. "Kings of the earth, and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, both young men and maidens, old men and children"—not one of them, but has a personal interest in this question, and a lesson of duty to derive from the answer. It is pregnant with questions for the soul:

How old art THOU?

To this question I propose to reply for you; and I have no doubt that the answers I shall put in for you are undeniably true.

I. There is not a person here so old as Jacob, nor that is likely to be, nor one that expects, or dreams, ever to be so old. One hundred and thirty years he had already seen. Nearly twenty years more would be added to his age. And of the whole sum of near one hundred and fifty years—long as it seems to us—nearly nine tenths were already spent and gone!

But what is your life? It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. Three-score years and ten, perchance four-score, perchance ninety, in all. But what are these to your eternity! And what are they, when we think how many of yours are gone from your possession forever? For the question, "How old art thou?" carries with it the startling implication that, whether the years appointed to you be few or many, a very considerable part of your allotted time is already passed away. And if your by-gone years were as many as Methuselah's, yet it does not seem so much to have had them, when we reflect that however brilliant they may have been, or more likely filled up with hopes deferred making the heart sick, the tale is almost told out, and hastens to its end. How pathetic was that exclamation of Charles X. of France, on being informed of the death of his brother, Louis XVIII., and of his own accession to the throne. The poor, old, foolish king, that would no more be admonished, coming forth, as it were from prison to reign, looked toward the uneasy throne to which his tottering steps were bearing him, and with a pang of bitter recollection, let drop these words that so well expressed the vanity of this late offering to ambition: "And I, I am so old!" In this view, of how many may it not be said, "Your days in store are few." When you, who are forty, sixty, or more, look backward, the whole of the past seems as yesterday, and as a watch in the night; and it makes the time that yet may possibly be yours, seem fearfully brief indeed. As for the most of you, who are still young, we know that they will never live to be old. The observation of all generations teaches this striking, this appalling fact. And even of the diminished period that is allotted to you, how soon will the remnant expire! How old art thou? This question—I repeat it—reminds you that a considerable portion is already sealed up and laid away, with the years beyond the flood.

Its mercies and enjoyments, its afflictions and its sins, its privileges and opportunities—all, all, irrecoverably exhausted! You will never live them again, you will never see them again, till there is unfolded to you at the judgment-seat, the register of that report they bore of you to heaven!

How short a time it is since you hailed the preceding New Year! The sands of its successor are swiftly falling in the glass. Who can tell how many years are in store! While the narrow limit of the longest life is every day becoming narrower still.

The story is told of an Italian state prisoner, who after some weeks confinement, became suddenly aware that his apartment was become smaller. He watched, and saw with horror, that a moveable iron wall was gradually encroaching on the space, and that as the movement came on, it must soon crush him to death, and he could calculate it to a day! But you have not that advantage. John Foster, yet more appropriately, resembles our time to a sealed reservoir, from which issues daily a certain small quantity of water, and when the reservoir is exhausted, we must perish of thirst; but we have no means of sounding it to ascertain how much it originally contained, nor whether there be enough remaining even for to-morrow!

And now, my hearers, if I may here use the thought of another, let me ask you if you are a Christian, and if so, how old are you in grace? What progress have you made? How long is it since you were first in Christ? Is it forty years since you were born again? Is it but one? This is the true life. What are its stages with your soul? Are ye yet babes, or strong in manhood; or, matured in piety, are you flourishing like the palm tree, and growing like a cedar on Lebanon? What attainments have you made in knowledge, in faith, in purity, in patience, in self-control, in love, and joy, and peace? What fruits have you put forth, and who is the better for your religion? What good have you done? Whom have you sought to benefit by your labors and your example, your gifts and your prayers, and your sacrifices for Christ and for the bodies and souls of men? There should have been healthful and vigorous growth, by this time. You are old enough of a certainty, to be both wiser and better since you first saw the Lord. Or, have you been stationary only? Which is the same as to say fruitless, selfish, a consumer, but not a producer of good, a barren fig tree, and a cumberer of the ground, fit only to be hewn down and cast into the fire?

Are you a Christian, and ripening for heaven? Then, O thou afflicted and tost, then are you drawing nearer to heaven. The port is not far off. The years you have counted off, have brought you nigher to it. The passing years, the few that are yet to come, every one speeding your approach to the celestial city. It will not be long, ere you shall have done with sins, and conflicts, and toils,

your pilgrimage be over, and your soul shall enter into rest. "For now is your salvation nearer than when you believed. Happy ye who are as men waiting for their Lord."

Are you not a Christian? Ah! what a question is this! And how old art thou? Thy time was given thee for the service of God, for working out thy salvation, for serving thy generation, for securing eternity through repentance toward God and through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And is all this yet to be begun? How much of this, the chief end of your being, have you left undone? How much of usefulness and blessing to the world, how much of truest consolation to yourself, how much precious time and opportunity have you wasted and squandered like a thoughtless spendthrift? And now, so many years as you have lived, so much of your own space for repenting, for believing, for seeking peace in the kingdom of God, for godly living, for doing good, for improving your talents for your own welfare and the welfare of your fellow-men, and for glorifying God, is gone, gone, and worse than wasted! Does it not become you to begin at once with all diligence to retrieve life and make sure of the waning day of salvation, to walk circumspectly, to redeem the time, and by wise economy of what remains and is ready to die, to recover, if haply you may, the losses you have already and so disastrously incurred? Every year that opens, every day that dawns, speaks to you with a more awful urgency: "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," "escape for thy life," "tarry not," "flee for refuge to the hope set before you," "work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh in which no man can work," but the wicked and slothful shall be recompensed by their abused and indignant Lord.

II. How old art thou? I answer again, for you. You are old enough to have endured afflictions, from which you ought to have extracted spiritual profit.

"Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been"—"the days of the years of my pilgrimage"—"nor attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." How true a representation of Jacob's life do these graphic expressions make.

It was a "pilgrimage," literally. Frequently obliged to change his residence, an exile to Mesopotamia, to and fro in Canaan, and now into Egypt. In the earth he was but a stranger and a sojourner as all his fathers were. The ancient patriarchs seemed to have no fixed habitation. They wandered from place to place. They had a burying-place, and for this they sought more earnestly than for a dwelling. A pilgrim is as one without a home, subject to toil, to travel about, exposed to every discomfort and danger. And thus it is with man. His life itself is hurried along by the ever-flowing tide. Like a traveler, from the very day of his birth, he must

set out, be always astir, pursue his journey, amid numberless annoyances and perils, meeting uncounted trials, and seldom finding repose for his weary footsteps.

"Evil," is another characteristic of Jacob's life. His early flight from home; the frauds and oppressions of Laban; in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night, and sleep departed from his eyes; the dissensions of his wives and of his children; the shame of Dinah, his only daughter, and the blood-stained revenge of her brothers; the unnatural wickedness of Reuben, his first-born; and the loss of Joseph; and not least, the wo that was threatening in the yet recent demand for Simeon and Benjamin as hostages to the unknown governor of Egypt; all these are but specimens, each, and every one, the source of deepest distress, accumulated till he complains, "All these things are against me," and he fears that his "grey hairs will be dragged in sorrow to the grave."

But does he stand alone? Is there in the mirror no familiar form—thy own features? "Man is born to trouble." It is his birth-right and inheritance, and he enters upon it as soon as he is born. The cries of infancy, the tears and sobs of childhood, the outburst of physical pain, soon changed to the heavier sighs extorted from the sad, sick heart. And as youth and manhood advance, trouble and sorrow spring up in their path and bear more productively their bitter fruit. There are sunny days—it would be thankless to deny it—and "smiles with tears meeting;" but the days of darkness are many.

How old art thou? Ah! whether you be old or young, you know what it is to feel pain, loss, bereavement, disappointment, and blighted hopes, mortification, ingratitude, fear, and dread! Enough to make you realize that it is not mere poetry, nor gloomy, distempered fanaticism, which declares that "earth is all vanity, false, as 'tis fleeting;" experience enough that the fair fruit of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah which have tempted your appetite, yield but bitter ashes to the taste; enough to urge you to aspire to the fairer inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away. Look back only upon one year. Has there not been cause for weeping; has there not been distress and anguish? Ah! my hearers, every heart knoweth its own bitterness.

Why was it? Whence was it? Trouble springs not from the ground. It was meant to admonish you that this is not the place of your rest. It came in mereiful rebuke. He does not willingly afflict, but he administers correction. His fatherly chastening should have begot reflection, perhaps the remorse of awakening conscience. It was designed to sanctify. Among Christians, though no present affliction is joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, after they have suffered awhile, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of

righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. And sinners have found in the trouble that disturbed their guilty repose, the grace and calling that led them to godly sorrow, and the repentance that needeth not to be repented of.

Such have been His dispensations, not for his pleasure, but for our profit.

And now, how is it with your soul? Is it well? Can you say that it has been, and yet is, well with thee? Have your sorrows taught you to look away from the things that are temporal, and awakened a longing for those which are eternal? Have they begot conviction? Have they led you to abandon sin, and broken its dominion? Have they produced in you greater conformity to Christ, disciplined you to patience, made you modest and moderate, meek and sympathizing, and persuaded you to rest satisfied with the consolation that abounds by Christ and to be sanctified by the full assurance of hope?

Unless this, you have only lost so much of earthly happiness, without any gain or compensation; nay, you have incurred greater guilt. You may have fainted unworthily under his rebuke: or you may have despised and defied the chastening of the Lord. But in either case, you have forfeited the blessing that is mingled with the cup of bitterness, and failed of that spiritual health which God conveys to the contrite soul through the discipline of His merciful providence.

III. How old art thou? You are old enough to have committed much sin, to realize it, and feel what work you have made for bitter but salutary repentance.

The wicked go astray from the womb, speaking lies. The evil nature resides in every soul of man—the deceitful and selfish heart, the folly and the perverse way, the neglect and the disobedience, the frivolous pursuit and waste, the deadly transgression, the stab to conscience, the wounding and the dishonor, the evil done to your own soul, the evil done to the souls of others whom you have seduced into the partnership of your sin!

I would not merely urge the general common-places that prove human depravity. Let me appeal to conscience, not altogether seared—it may be, all alive and sensitive to the probing.

Ye aged! review your life. Call up the ghosts of the past. Ah! lurking there in the corners of memory, how many deeds ye would not for all the world, your fellow-men should know? How many desires not good, and plans impure and unjust? How many mercies that besought you with their affecting voice and tender persuasion, to consecrate yourselves in living sacrifice to God? How many kindnesses ungratefully requited? How many slighted calls, when the goodness of God allured, and the terrors of the Lord alarmed and warned, when loving parents wept and prayed over your wayward youth, and faithful ministers entreated your

manhood, and still, down to hoary hairs you are invited to return to God? And how is it this day? Ah! Christian, I know something of thy heart. Thy own soul remembers and is pierced, and is humbled within thee, even whilst thou turnest to thy forgiving Saviour to thank him that he hath not suffered thee to forget his way altogether, and that he hath often restored thee to the paths of righteousness. And ye aged, that live in unrepented sin! Does this question "How old art thou?" does it pierce and rend thy heart? What is the record of thy past years, and scores of years, that even now perchance thou darest not confront, and hast striven to forget the registry? What transgressions without relenting? What broken vows of amendment? What cherished impenitence and hardness? What inveterate unbelief? Ah! is it incurable, after all the resistance thou hast made to the appeals of heaven and the strivings of God's spirit? What more to be done for thy salvation than has been done? What more solemn truths and solemn scenes to waken thee, than those thou hast already and so often heard and beheld? What other Saviour has heaven to offer than the loving, suffering, atoning, Jesus from whom thou hast so often turned away? How is it with thee? The days of thy youth shall not return to thee. Thy very life is ebbing fast. Its flush and flood are gone. Thy tottering feet are set forward at the grave's mouth, and thy next step——! Art thou prepared to meet thy God, to stand before thy Judge, to hear thy doom? Why are your thoughts troubled? Accusing conscience tell me why? Thou knowest that thou art an unpardoned sinner, that thou canst not give account for one of a thousand iniquities, that unrenewed in heart, thou art not fit for heaven! And, while the Judge standeth at the door, thou art afraid to encounter his face! Why, even now, whilst thou art in the way with him, why, dost thou not seek to become reconciled to God?

And ye youth! Is it any better with you? Will it be any better for you to live on, and to grow harder in sin? You may live, though the aged will not, and, therefore, you put death afar off. You plead, "Let me rejoice in my youth and indulge the desire of my heart, and walk in the sight of my eyes." And so you set yourselves to work iniquity with greediness. But is not this to appropriate and anticipate the curse of the aged transgressor? It is the abuse of that mercy which prolongs your day; it courts the vengeance of judgment; and, at the end of your career, there may be nothing left to you, but to curse your own existence, to bewail the day of your birth, and to utter the unavailing wish that you had never been born.

We rejoice on our birth-days and at the New Year. But look back to but that one year you deem so old that it must be hurried away to join the tedious and forgotten past. Call up its few, short months once more, and question them. Ah! do they not wear

the angry face of an accuser? Do no sins rise up before awakened conscience, no broken resolutions, no deferred promises of amendment that have not yet been redeemed? And what were its last flying hours and waving wings, but a monitor to thee that thy perdition is not slumbering, and thy unlingering judgment has moved one year forward in its march to thee. How is it now? Are you better or are you worse than you were a year ago?

The thoughtless impenitence of youth is in itself a sad proof of their sinfulness, and a melancholy witness that they are already far gone in depravity. Already to make a mock at sin, to jest at death, to trifle with eternity, to scoff and to scorn at sacred things, to trample upon God's commandments, to shut up his Bible, to be weary of his house and his Sabbath, to reject the loving Saviour, to restrain prayer and cast off fear, perhaps to coin the ready lie, the filthy jest, the impious oath, to indulge the incipient fraud, the angry and malignant passion, and the impure desire! Need I go on? Ah! does thy conscience send back no response, does thy heart tremble with no foreboding? Then art thou already more hardened than I had deemed, and on thy shameless brow is stamped the seal of thy dishonoring guilt! But nay, let me recall this judgment. Can we not discern some restlessness of soul, some quivering of the eye, some paling, and now some flushing of the cheek, some suppression of the breath, tell-tales that thy conscience is not yet seared as with a hot iron, that thou art not yet so low and so lost as to glory in thy shame? We hail these ingenuous emotions. "The man that blushes, is not quite a brute." Let then this shame-faced consciousness awaken in thee conviction, and beget a salutary alarm, and prompt thee to confess thy sin to Him whose precious blood can wash it all away, and withdraw thy perilous footsteps from the evil paths wherein thou art, even in the morning of thy days, so old a traveler.

IV. How old art thou? You are old enough to be converted, and to begin to follow Christ.

For this work, you can not be too young. Why is it, that, because the natural iniquity so soon appears and goes out in the sins of youth and manhood, why, should it be thought a matter of course that, the young must, in every case, pursue a certain length in impenitence and transgression, as if this were more suitable to their circumstances, and more allowable to their impetuous dispositions, or as if, at least, it were necessary, in order to furnish the occasion and the phenomena of a striking conversion? Can they not be sanctified from the womb? Can they not be taught the knowledge of God, and the way of salvation, and be brought to the love of Christ, and be weaned from their evil propensities, even when they are weaned from the breast? Are there not examples enough in the history of Abel, and Joseph, and Samuel, and David, and Josiah, and John the Baptist, and Timothy; and examples enough in the history of God's people now, and of many

a Christian household, and of every church, to show that the religious training of the young, with faith in God's covenant, and with direct view to their walking in the ways of godliness, from their very childhood, is not a vain thing, and that they were indeed baptized into Christ? Examples so numerous, and so genuine, and convincing; yet, nevertheless, young Christians, and their parents, and pastors, and elders, it may be, have feared to recognize them as subjects of the new birth, merely because there was nothing remarkable about them, except their simple and singular piety, their conscientiousness, and truthfulness, and prayerfulness, and their consistent service of the Lord from their tender infancy. Alas! it is not always so, and, perhaps, it is we, their parents, who are most to blame for it. But one thing is clear, that the young can be converted to God, and the Bible, and the Church in every age, alike afford the abundant proof. The bulk of the Christians who are before me, are such as remembered their Creator in the days of their youth—almost in the dew of their childhood. You, then, who are old enough to hear me this day, are old enough to experience this change, to become followers of God, as dear children.

But, farther, the young have not the experience of their elders. You know not what trials and temptations are before you, nor with force they make their onset. You think you have power, as you are, to withstand them all. The aged thought so once, and they are weeping now over the retrospect of many a sad error and disastrous fall. What then, do you need? Is it not that you should seek the Lord, make him the guide of your youth, lean upon his arm, and put yourself under the shield of his grace? Thus only can you meet the evil days, escape the snare of the fowler, and avoid the path of the destroyer.

Yes, you are old enough to know that you are sinners; you do know that Christ asks and urges you to come to him. You know that you ought to seek his grace, and to obey his Gospel, and to love him with your whole heart. You have lived long enough to have learned all this, and you have known it, even while you have been neglecting, and postponing, and disobeying it. But see now where you are on the pathway of time to eternity. Consider your ways. How old art thou? You have spent some of your choicest years and freshest affections. There is nothing to come that is so fresh, so warm, so precious, so worthy, to offer to your Saviour, as the warm and tender affection of your young heart. The years to come will make you more selfish, more callous, more crafty, but they will not find you more pious, nor more disposed to be pious, if you do not use this golden opportunity and consecrate this fairest portion and spring-time of your happy age.

And all this appeals with increased force to the more matured—to the aged that are among you. Are you not old enough to be converted to God? There was, perchance, a time when you

thought you were not. Then—amid busy cares and worldly schemes—you postponed the work. Then you said to the gospel call, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." How long ago was that? Were you not then in the heyday of your youth? And now, then, how old art thou, this day? Ten, twenty, thirty, forty years have gone by since then. And is thy convenient season not yet come? Oh! when, when shall it once be? Your work is harder now than it would have been had you begun it earlier. And soon it will be impossible. Your day is far spent, the night is at hand, and what will you do then? What will you do now? Are you not yet old enough? There was once a man healed of his chronic disease by a miracle; and it was recorded, perhaps as enhancing the wonder, that it was performed when he was forty years of age. Old sores and old bones are not easily cured. Perhaps the healing of your soul may require such a miracle. But not such can ever be your privilege, unless you go, and go promptly, to the Great Physician, who is able to save to the uttermost. Ah! you are old enough, heaven knows! yea, too old to wait any longer!

I do not say that you are too old to repent and be converted, too old to be healed by Christ. For you, even at this eleventh hour, if you will now hear his word, and implore and accept his grace, he still waits to be gracious. But why standest thou here idling till the sun goes down?

V. Finally. How old art thou? Old enough to die. You need not be of Jacob's age for that. Even the youth faint, and the young utterly fail. There is but a step between you and death. You may have to take that step at any time. Boast not thyself even of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what one day may bring forth.

Count not on length of days. As my eye sweeps over this vast assembly, it glances on some—who they are, God knoweth—but this I know, that twelve months from now, they will not be on earth to listen to the question, how old art thou? Already is that mighty angel poising his feet upon the sea and upon the land, commissioned to lift his hand and swear by Him that liveth forever and ever, that your time shall be no longer. For already has the sentence gone forth from the throne, on some of you: "THIS YEAR THOU SHALT DIE!"

Oh! that ye were wise: Oh! that ye understood this: Oh! that ye would consider your latter end.

And thou, O Lord, our dwelling-place! do thou so teach us the measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are, that by thy mercy, in Jesus Christ, we may recover strength and salvation ere we go hence and are no more. Teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom—the wisdom that conducts to eternal life and blessedness with thee, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON VII.*

BY REV. E. S. WRIGHT.

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THE CLOUD AND THE TABERNACLE.

"Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed."—Numbers 9: 22.

There is a very beautiful and instructive analogy between the means which God made use of to fit his people for the inheritance of Canaan, and the method which he now takes to sanctify his Church, and to prepare her for the heavenly rest. So that the Psalmist, when wishing to express to all ages, what God will be to his Church in every age, in sanctifying her members, and in disciplining her for his service, says: "He made known his ways unto Moses; his acts unto the children of Israel." If we desire to know what God is, and how he works, we have only to consider his way with Moses. We have only to look at his acts toward the children of Israel. True, no material tabernacle now incloses the Church. Our feet have not to walk to a literal Canaan, over the hot sands of a desert.

But our souls have to press their way with many pains, through a world contaminated, darkened, cursed by sin, to the heavenly Canaan, and to the city of God. Christ is our tabernacle, in whom is contained our ark of the covenant, our shew-bread, and our mercy-seat.

His spiritual discipline, and his providential dispensations, are the cloud and the fire by which he marks out our way, regulates the rapidity of our journey, and fits us for the final possession.

They, in that literal wilderness of the East, and we in this spiritual desert, must go "looking unto Jesus." They looking forward to a coming Messiah, and we looking backward to him already come, crucified and glorified; our eyes meet upon the same Saviour; our hearts grow warm with a common love to him; and we find ourselves "eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink."

There is a guiding truth set forth in the text which may help us to a truthful view of the present position of the Church of

* Preached before the Presbytery of Buffalo, and published by request of Rev. Dr. Thompson and other members.

God, and to a profitable consideration of the duties which God requires of us, that we may be ready for the work which he has given us to do.

Two points of inquiry are suggested:

I. Why is the Church in our day so much of the time under the cloud, and seemingly put back in the progress of long-continued revivals of religion?

II. What are some of the special duties which belong to us during these seasons when the cloud is before the door of our tabernacle, that we may be prepared for the more rapid and steady progress which is to precede the millennium?

It seems, when the tabernacle was reared in the wilderness, a cloud covered it, which by night had the appearance of fire. As this cloud rose or fell, the children of Israel journeyed or rested. "When the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle, many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed." We very naturally ask, Why must these cloud-falling times so often come? Why these halting periods for a day, a month, or a year? And, why must forty years be consumed in crossing a desert, which by a direct route, might be traversed in a few weeks?

We answer, For the same reason that the Church now has her cloud-falling and her cloud-rising periods; her toilsome marches and her frequent haltings, as she seeks the personal holiness of her members, and is moving toward her final triumph over the world, and on to her rest in heaven. Sin is the trouble. It took but a few moments to bring it into the world. But it takes ages to get it out. The first Adam, by one act of disobedience, left a moral poison in our natures, which Christ, our second Adam, can eradicate only by a process of renewal, and by healing medicines, and by careful nurture, and by holy discipline, and by the pardon and cleansing of many offenses unto justification of life. It is this sin in us which so wearies us in the march of holiness. It is this which puts us back from heaven. It makes us rebellious against God. It invites the assaults of Satan. It makes us ignorant, and weak, and self-reliant, and self-seeking; so that we can not march long at a time without getting so elated, that God must let down the cloud a little while; a day, a month, or a year, as our ease may be, to get us ready to march again.

The best Christians, after a rapid and rejoicing progress in piety, and after such foretastes of heaven as make earth a weariness and sin a burden, suddenly begin to feel the cloud falling before them. Their spirits pause in sorrow, and they mourn that they can not journey as they did. So also the Church, after de-

lightful seasons of revival, soon begins to see the cloud settling down before her tabernacle. The work goes on but a little while in the still and overwhelming power of the Spirit. It is but a short time that our hearts will keep humble, and our faith strong, and our motives spiritual, and our zeal tempered by love and guided by wisdom. We soon get to think that our own arm hath gotten us the victory. We are elated by the number of conversions. Sectarian and secular advantages begin to be computed. And so the Spirit is grieved. Or, as our hearts lose the first earnestness of a true spiritual zeal, they become the soil of a false enthusiasm, which leads to noise and tumult, and often to wild speculations, and startling errors, and fatal delusions. There is more zeal than love; more exhortation than feeling; more action than thought; more exhaustion than supply; more of the form of prayer than faith; more outward exertion than personal holiness.

In this way a necessity is made for God to let fall the cloud upon the tabernacle. He must call us into our tents to discipline us for a more deep and thorough work of grace, that he may prepare us for a more safe and long-continued march in our journey.

In the days of Edwards, after the great awakening, there was a most mournful declension in religion. In the excess of work, without faith, faith was lost sight of, God was set at a distance. Man was exalted in his imagined capacity to save himself. The doctrines of original sin and total depravity, election and sovereignty, which throw men over upon the redemptive love of God, as the only hope of the lost, were controverted, discussed, discarded. Worldliness swept into the Church, heresy became rife in the very bosom of orthodoxy, fanaticism became restive under the restrains of the Church, and was anxious to journey on, without regard to order, the institutions of Christ, or the oracles of God.

It was time now for the cloud to pause before the tabernacle. There was work to be done in the tents.

The strong men of God who had been so blessed during the awakening, in winning souls and in comforting saints, watching and weeping, lest the work should cease, must now go to their studies and try to steady the ark with their pens, since they could not do it with their hands.

Edwards must write his searching treatise on the "Religious Affections," to stir the people up to self-examination and prayer, lest they perish with the hope of the hypocrite at last, and, like ancient Israel, fall in the desert before they reach the promised land.

Leaving his flock at Northampton, this great man of God retires to Stockbridge. He becomes a quiet missionary among the Indians, and a preacher in the village church. There, in a secluded

camp of the New-England Israel, he wrote his masterly treatises on the "Human Will" and on "Original Sin."

Bellamy, of Connecticut, also buckled on his intellectual armor, to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. And soon his work, entitled "True Religion Delineated," made its appearance.

And, indeed, for nearly fifty years the mind and heart of American Christendom were occupied in settling old foundations, and in getting ready for the advances which were to be made upon the kingdom of darkness in the nineteenth century. During this interval which lay between the time of Edwards, Bellamy, Whitefield, and the opening of the present century, God had a great work to do in in getting the camp ready to march with safety, in the line of progress which his providence had been marking out for us and for our children.

It required long and patient discipline in the doctrines and duties of religion, to fit us for this hasty age. It demanded a fast fixing of foundation-principles to enable us to enter upon the period of revivals in our times, and to carry out successfully the large plans of Christian benevolence which are peculiar to this age.

The principles of our missionary, Bible, tract, and Sabbath-School operations, now spanning the world with their influence, and almost lapping on to the millennial era, were formed while our Israel was in the camp, and under the cloud, and not amidst the bustling activities of the march, and when cheered by the pillar of fire. And now that we have entered upon this career of progress, the old evil of sin comes in again, to disturb and retard us. For our danger now lies in a reliance on the largeness of our means of progress, rather than on God himself.

There is a tendency in our nature to self-reliance, which is strongly appealed to, as we multiply means and instrumentalities. It requires great grace and a large measure of previous discipline, and frequent humiliations to keep us feeling and saying, as we go to our work of conquest for Christ, Not by might, nor by power, but by thy Spirit, O Lord. And so, God must often bring us into pecuniary straits, and cut off our men and our means, and cause painful delays, and sad embarrassments, and short triumphs, and unforeseen obstacles, and cloud-falling times, that we may feel our weakness and renew our strength; and, with all our facilities for saving ourselves and the world, that we may just lay ourselves over, with the simplicity of children, upon the supernatural power of God, and the sole guidance of Christ, saying: "Help Lord, for without thee we can do nothing." There is a kind of secular religious prosperity, in which we are very apt to lose progress, in proportion to the rapidity with which we seem to move. Our houses of worship may fill up; our wealth may increase; and yet

with the increase of numbers and wealth, we may be nourishing pride and self-sufficiency, and a growing declension of vital trust in God, which will put us back for our sins, farther than we had seemed to advance. In these seasons of false prosperity our hearts get lifted up, and God can not work with us. Our speech and our preaching is too much in the enticing words of man's wisdom and too little in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. We are tempted to labor more to attract men than to save them; and to lean more upon a full assembly than upon the mighty God of Jacob.

But as soon as we cease to live on God alone, as we rely upon the air for life, and on food for nourishment, we may expect soon to stop marching, and to be called into the camp for discipline. The remark which Dr. Bellamy makes to David Brainerd, in a letter written more than a century ago, has in it words of wisdom for the Church at large. In a postscript to his letter, he says: "All our Christians love you dearly. The Lord's design is for us not to live on his interests rising, or on his children, or on inherent grace, or on any thing else that is not God; but to live merely on God alone. Dear brother, farewell! The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, be with you forever and ever. Amen and amen."

We have endeavored to show from the history of Israel in the wilderness, why it is that we journey so slowly in the Christian life, and why the Church at large is so often checked in her growth and usefulness in seasons of revival, by the falling of the cloud before the door of her tabernacle.

II. It is time to hasten to the next point suggested by our text, and to inquire, What are some of the prominent duties which God requires of us while under the cloud, that we may be ready the sooner to arise and go forward in the more active duties, and in the more joyful experiences of revival days?

First: in general, to be ready for the lifting up of the cloud, that we may go forth in efficient service in revival scenes, we must be diligent in all the ordinary duties of the tabernacle when it is resting. There is a fretful and noisy impatience for the exciting novelties of a revival season, and a tiresomeness of the monotony of ordinary religious duties, which may awaken a natural desire for excitement, while there is no growth of spirituality from the common means of grace. There is also a more healthy and spiritual desire, which is the slow growth of a daily discipline, and an habitual delight in the ordinary means of grace and a rising spiritual life, when the cloud is still before the Church. The latter is the best preparation for a long and a prosperous march when God lifts the cloud and bids us on to victory under the light and warmth of the pillar of fire.

Thus, when the cloud was upon Israel, they were constantly engaged in religious duties; in keeping the passover, and in the various acts of worship and service which were required of them. Had they neglected these duties when under the cloud, how poorly would they have been prepared to march when the cloud was lifted up! Would they not have forgotten God and have been soon reduced to idolatry?

Among the duties which are specially incumbent, when the Church is under the cloud, we will enumerate those which God has signalized in the history of the tabernacle, as those which at all times are essential to the Christian character and life.

1. Christian benevolence, which answers quickly to the voice of God, as stewards of his manifold grace, in liberal and conscientious giving to the various objects of religious charity which are designed to promote the good of men and the glory of Christ. Much of the time while the tabernacle was under the cloud, was spent in bringing offerings and consecrating them to God upon the altar.

So important was this duty considered, that the names of those who brought the offerings have come down to us as recorded in the book of Numbers. In this way God would teach us the value in which he holds our ordinary acts of self-denial, even when we are favored with no marked evidences of the awakening of the world around us, or the conversion of sinners. The spirit of Christian benevolence is a revival spirit in the Church of God at all times; and when it prevails largely, it is a sure indication that other fruits of the Spirit will follow in the appropriate order and time of the Husbandman. And He who caused the acts of self-sacrifice in the wilderness to be written beside the names of his people, will see that what we do for Christ when the cloud is over us, shall have a place by our names in the records of eternity, and in the Book of Life.

Of the names of Israel, one is spoken of as having offered in behalf of his tribe, a silver charger and a silver bowl full of fine flour mingled with oil; a golden spoon, full of incense; four animals from the herds and flocks, for a burnt-offering; one kid for a sin-offering; and seventeen animals from the herds and flocks, for the service of the tabernacle. Eleven others, heads of the tribes, made similar offerings, until there were accumulated at one time, twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold, and for meat-offerings, burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings, two hundred and fifty-two of the choicest animals from their flocks and herds.

And now, that all ages may see the connection between the active benevolence of God's people while under the cloud, and their future prosperity, it is said, after the offerings were all dedicated, as Moses was going into the tabernacle he heard the voice of God

speaking to him from off the mercy-seat, and communing with him from between the cherubims. He was ordered to prepare the tabernacle and the people for the march. And soon the command follows, "Rise and go forward."

What an intimation have we here of the part which the Church is to act in times of ordinary religious interest in devoting herself strenuously, and with a large-hearted generosity, to every work of Christian charity and reform; and especially to the support of the worship of God and the means of grace, if we would hear the voice of God speaking to us from the mercy-seat, and communing with us from between the cherubims! Oh! we are not far from revival days, and great outpourings of the Spirit, and a rapid progress in holiness, and a sure march toward heaven, when God is pleased with our sacrifices, and when he so accepts and rewards our offerings as to let his voice be heard in our assemblies, and to grant the communings of his Spirit in all the services of the tabernacle, even while the cloud is before the door.

2. Besides the duty of Christian liberality in affording the means for meeting the pecuniary exigences of the Church, the ordinary means of grace should be specially improved by the entire membership of the Church as a preparation for seasons of extraordinary effort.

It is not by artificial stimulants, occasionally taken, that we gain the compactness of muscle and the strength of frame which fit us for those emergencies which call forth great physical strength. This strength is the slow growth of nutriment habitually taken to satisfy the cravings of hunger, and to supply the daily waste of the system. So, if Christ's body, the Church, would be fitted for extraordinary effort, in seasons of special religious interest, this fitness must be the result of accumulated strength derived from the daily spiritual bread which is found in the ordinary means of grace.

Indeed, how long have observation and experience been teaching us that it is only by such means that the Church is made ready for the long-continued blessing of God in seasons of revival!

It is strange that we are so slow to learn that a falling-off of interest in the public worship of God, in the Sabbath-school, in family, secret, and social prayer, and in the personal effort to be holy day by day, is a waste of strength which God will work no miracle to replace when he calls for special labors.

Who has not noticed that so soon as we are faithful in the daily duties of the tabernacle, it is not long before the cloud is lifted up? How often have we observed that the sources of spiritual power in revivals of religion are found just where the Church is taught to look for growth in personal holiness—in closet-wrestling, in careful watching unto prayer, in the well-filled prayer-meeting, in large and noble charities, in deep love for the young, in the

fresh glow of Sabbath-school life, in the sweet communion of the saints, in the unfettered spirit of brotherly love, and in those graces of the Christian character which we are commanded at all times to cultivate!

We have short revivals, and sad relapses, and long declensions, in religion, because we so soon begin to rely upon the effects of prayer and personal faithfulness, rather than to keep ourselves in the quiet places of power from whence the effects proceed.

The noise of the wheels which the Spirit of Life has set in motion, diverts us from the Spirit of Life itself.

When the dry bones are lying dead and still in the valley of vision, we can only cry: "Come, O Breath! and breathe upon these slain." But when they move, and waken, and come together, and are clothed with flesh, and rise up, and are in motion with the noise of an army, it is difficult to rely upon God as closely as we did before a bone stirred in the valley, and when we went mourning after the Almighty Breath to wake them into life. It is so natural for us to think we can march alone, when the cloud is lifted up, that God is compelled to drop the cloud upon us again, and to take us through the old discipline of the camp, that he may confirm us in the spirit of dependence and in a settled obedience and faith, as the conditions of a rapid personal sanctification, of victory over the world, and the speedy possession of the earth for Christ.

The sum of all is this, my brethren, to maintain the ground which we have passed over in the recent revival of religion, and to secure to ourselves the constant fruits of the Spirit, in the sanctification of the Church, in the evangelizing of our country, and in the conversion of the world to Christ, according to promise, we are simply to give ourselves up mightily to the work which God gives us daily to do, in prayer, in watchfulness, in self-sacrifice, in longings after God, and in obedience to his will, whether it be in the quiet of the clouded tabernacle or in the more bustling activity of the march, when the cloud is lifted up.

We want all the faith in the supernatural power of God to keep us in the daily spirit of prayer, to keep the piety of the Church every day from declining and ourselves from falling, which we need when awakened souls are asking us, What shall we do to be saved?

There are reserved resources in the kingdom of God which we have not yet reached and developed by prayer. Our faith has only drawn forth here and there, and at distant intervals, and in small measure, that abundant fullness of the promises which is yet to be laid hold of by the Church of Christ, and to cause the wonders of apostolic days to be repeated, and a national Pentecost to be realized.

It must be that God can not desire a long and sad declension

after such an advance as the Church has recently made. It is like God to economize moral influence. Whether the cloud remain upon us a month, a day, or a year, will depend upon the speed with which we get ready again to go forward.

Let the fatal delusion be banished from our minds, that we shall be ready to march when God lifts the cloud, if while it is over us we are sluggish, unspiritual, unprayerful. How many fell at last in the wilderness and perished! They did not hold out until they got to Canaan. Perhaps they were reluctant in the service of the tabernacle when the cloud was before it, and so they got not the habit of obedience, and were unfit for toil in the time of journeying. They did not take time enough to get on the shield of faith and the breast-plate of righteousness. They were not used to wielding the sword of the Spirit, and had not fitted closely to their heads the helmet of salvation, and perhaps their feet were not shod with the preparation of spiritual peace. Thus, their hearts grew faint and their feet weary as soon as they began the active duties of the journey. Drones in the camp, they were laggards in the march.

They are ready to murmur under the increase of labors, to rebuke Moses for bringing them out of Egypt to see Anakims over the Jordan and the walls of opposing enemies.

The workers who are steady in every duty when the cloud rests upon the tabernacle, are best prepared to go at the bidding of God, when it is lifted up, and are most hopeful of reaching Canaan at last.

My brethren, can we not see the signs of another uplifting of the cloud, soon to come, when the Church shall be seen passing on in the joyful progress of revival days, all bright and beautiful with a holy consecration, and with a delightful unity of love and faith and prayer, which will draw great numbers to the door of our tabernacle, to begin with us their journey to heaven?

Let us come then, into the tabernacle and prepare to journey. Let us come with hope to the places of secret prayer. Let us come to the circles of social prayer. Let us remember the family altar.

God is only waiting to see us ready for the march. Much territory is yet to be possessed. One strong, united, earnest effort to return to God in the spirit of a true consecration, and the voice of God is ready to break out from the mercy-seat, saying: "Rise, and go forward!" Now, let my Spirit go forth. Let souls be awakened. Let the Jordan be crossed. Let the tall Anakims be slain. Let Christ have his inheritance and my people their millennium.

SERMON VIII.*

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THE DUTY OF MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

"EVEN so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."—1 COR. 9 : 14.

To live of the Gospel: what is it? The Apostle supposes that the minister of the Gospel is engaged in his work as a profession, and that he is therefore entitled to a remuneration for his labors. He refers to the provision made by the law of Moses, for the support of the Levites; the ministers of God under that dispensation; and says: Even so hath God provided, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel. A living for the Gospel minister, in this sense, includes all the provision that is to be made for his temporal welfare. As the merchant lives by his gains, and the mechanic by the avails of his labor, so the minister is to obtain his living by his services in his appropriate work. If the merchant or the artisan, the lawyer or the physician, includes the acquisition of a competence for sickness and age, the means of educating his children, and of promoting their general intelligence and usefulness, together with the numberless little comforts that make the home of taste and refinement cheerful and attractive, as well as food and raiment, in his estimate of a living, he will consider that his pastor has need of all these things. One rule applies to all. If it is expected in other occupations, that faithful labor will secure these advantages, then the minister should, by his labors in the Gospel, secure them in the same degree as those to whom he ministers.

It is in this sense, that the Lord has ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.

The text teaches the duty of Churches to pay for the capital, labor, and responsibility used in their service by their ministers, according to their value, as they pay men in other employments. And my present object is to enforce this duty by a few practical considerations.

* Preached before a conference of churches.

I. The work of the minister is costly to himself.

1. All the energies of the minister must be devoted to his work, or it can not be well done. He has the care of souls, and the responsibility of their salvation, so far as instrumentality is concerned, rests on him. The truth he preaches, is, to his flock, the instrument of salvation or of ruin. If he is faithful and diligent, rightly dividing the word of truth, it may be their salvation; but if through neglect or want of time to prepare himself properly for his pulpit labors, or of a right knowledge of the wants of his people, the truth should not reach their case, they will die in their iniquity, but their souls will be required at his hand. To prepare sermons adapted to the wants of his people, so as to declare unto them all the counsel of God, requires no small amount of time and anxious thought. If the pastor does his work well in the pulpit, and attends to all his pastoral duties, he will have no time, even in a small parish, for teaching, or farming, or for any other means of eking out a living.

If the minister of Church would fulfill his calling, he must give his whole time and mind to his work.

2. The minister's work is, relatively, expensive. He occupies a position which exposes him to expenses that can not be met with small means. In his social relations, he must be an example to his flock. No man in the parish is expected to be so well-informed on every topic of interest, as the minister; and if he is not well posted up in the current news, it often injures his reputation with a large class of those whom he would lead to Christ. His contributions to objects of Christian benevolence, must be as large as those of any of his people, for they often graduate their gifts by his. He must necessarily entertain more company than most of his people, and his family must always be in a situation to receive them. In the purchase of his supplies, he can not banter like business men, without losing character. If he should complain of the price of an article, he is at once set down as a lover of money; and the race of men who talk of selling goods to the minister at cost, and when the bill is presented, charge him ten or twenty per cent more than the cash price, is not by any means extinct. In many instances, and in different places, farmers have paid their subscriptions in produce, at prices from twenty to fifty per cent more than they would have asked in cash.

3. Then, there are the public meetings of the churches and councils, all necessary for the good of Zion, yet they cost something to the minister. His style of dress too, is, by the imperative custom of the churches, more expensive than others. I know there are many members of our churches who talk of the extravagance of the minister and his family, and yet they are the first to notice the thread-bare coat or the rusty hat; and to propose a

change of ministers, if their pastor does not appear as well as his neighbors. The minister is by his profession, and by common consent, placed in the highest social position, and if he, with his family, do not adorn that position, he will lose the respect of his people. He must also read much, so that he may feed his people with knowledge; he must, therefore, have at hand all necessary facilities for the study and illustration of truth. If his study is not well supplied with papers, periodicals, and books, he will soon be behind the times, and his people will begin to hunger after the food that he would but can not give. And while the mechanic, the farmer, or the sailor can at least earn their food and clothing, while in their preparatory course, the minister must spend eight or ten years of time, and at least an average of $2000 expenses, before he begins his work. This expense, and some hundreds invested in his library, is his capital employed in the service of his people. From his first essay at fitting for college, till his work is done, there is a continual call for expense, besides what is necessary for food and clothing.

4. The work of the ministry requires a large amount of skill and a sound judgment, and imposes great responsibility upon the minister. To have the care of souls, and to feel that his example and instructions are molding the character and the future condition of his people, is no small burden. Care and anxious thought are demanded; and the highest order of mind, with the most intense application, are required for the work. Such labor is more valuable than mere physical strength. The laborer may work harder, and seem to accomplish more than the foreman of the shop, while he really earns less, because the labor of the mind in planning and directing, is more important than the labor of the hands, in executing. The common sailor may work harder and endure more fatigue than the master, while the skill that guides the ship to its destined port, and the responsibility of the safety and success of the voyage, resting on the master, he justly receives many times the amount of the sailor's wages. The minister is the watchman; he must be ever wakeful and vigilant, or the enemy will trouble his flock. He is their instructor and guide in spiritual things, and if he fails to teach them the whole word of God, they will be deficient in their Christian character and experience. The Church will be very much what the pastor makes it. His responsibility is great and unceasing. The resources of the minister, and his constant vigilance and responsibility, are entitled to a proper consideration in estimating his compensation. Taking all these things into the account, what does justice require of his employers? Can a minister give his time and mind to his work without a just compensation? Will God prosper a church while they withhold it?

II. The minister's services are valuable to the people. The pulpit is in no wise indebted to its supporters. It gives them many times more in temporal good than it costs. It is the Sabbath, with its sanctuary, of which the ministry has ever been the light and power, that has made New-England the glory of the nation. It is the ministry, that, under God, and in the use of his Bible, has more than any other instrumentality, reformed mankind. It has restrained vice and prevented crime, while its healthful influence, radiating from the sanctuary, has made the public mind active and vigorous, and laid the foundation for industry, stability of character, and abiding prosperity.

It has ever been the first, the most important, means of civilization and social refinement; of gathering around the family home the tokens of thrift and comfort; of the increase of wealth, and of the productive value of real estate. What was the value of a house in Sodom, or a farm in its suburbs, to a good citizen, while like Lot, his family were continually exposed to the brutality of the people, unrestrained by the influence of the ministers of God? How much was Naboth's vineyard worth while Jezebel lived, and the prophets of the Lord were banished from Jezreel?

Life and property are more secure, under the influence of an evangelical ministry, than where the Gospel is not preached. That landholder in Maine, who, when his timber was cut and stolen, though not himself an orthodox man, went to the office of the Home Missionary Society to see if he could get a minister to go there and preach the Gospel, acted wisely. He knew what multitudes will not admit, that he could find no protection for his timber equal to the influence of an orthodox ministry. Thieves, and adulterers, and other pests of society, are not likely to remain long in the atmosphere of an evangelical pulpit.

The influence of a faithful pastor over the people, in promoting good order, in fortifying the public conscience, and thus establishing morality and preventing crime, and in giving stability and permanency to the means of securing general intelligence and the public good, makes him the most profitable of the agencies which they employ for their temporal prosperity. No parish can afford to do without a faithful minister; and if they try the experiment of crippling the energies of their pastor, by an insufficient compensation for his labors, they will feel, sooner or later, the effects of their neglect, in the growth of vice, the increase of crime, and the depreciation of property.

If, in addition to all this amount of worldly good, for which the people are indebted to the ministry, we scatter around you spiritual blessings; if we bring to the lost the tidings of salvation through the blood of a crucified Redeemer, by his appointment, and offer you, in his name, a heavenly inheritance, without money and without price; is it a great thing that we expect you to furnish

us a livelihood, in some good degree corresponding to your own? Is it not just that we should reap your carnal things? Is not the laborer worthy of his hire? Behold the hire of your laborers that have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them that have reaped, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

III. The standing and reputation of a minister is affected by his compensation.

There are some who think a minister should have a larger share of piety than is necessary for his people, and that for the purpose of keeping him humble and dependent, it is well that they should keep him poor. One such minister had the mortification, after some years of hard labor, on a pittance less than some of his people were adding to their stores from year to year, of being left dependent on their charity, and of hearing the fear expressed that his family would soon be a town-charge. There was another minister in this State, whose widow and fatherless children were the subject of a law-suit between two towns, to decide which should furnish them that support which the stewards for God had failed to give as a remuneration for his labors in the ministry. Were either of these men respected by their people? And why not? Simply because of their poverty. Let two ministers of similar capacities and address, be settled side by side, one with one thousand dollars salary, and the other with five hundred, and it will soon be seen that the reputation of the men is measured, not by their capacities, but by their position. And, let a minister with an intellect that might have made him an Edwards or an Emmons, be compelled to watch the expenditure of every cent, lest his expenses should exceed his means; or write his sermons under the influence of debts which he can not pay, and thus feel degraded by his poverty, and it will not be long before his mind will be cramped and his rank among his fellows will be inferior. Two sea-captains a few months since were talking of their voyages, when a fellow-traveler inquired the rate of compensation usually paid to captains of ships of from two to five hundred tons. Why, says one, there are men enough to be had for from sixty to eighty dollars per month for such ships; but, says the other, if a man should offer to take charge of a ship for me at that price I should take it for granted that he was not fit for the place. And yet there is not a minister in Barnstable County who receives $80 a month for his services, and but few who receives $60 a month, and some of us have young men in our parishes who have larger salaries as clerks or mates than we receive as ministers of the Gospel; and the result is, that our work is considered one of secondary importance, and our relative position inferior to more lucrative employments. In other employments, if a man works for less wages than his

neighbors of another trade, it is understood that his labor is not as valuable as his neighbor's. Does not the minister show that his services are really but half as valuable as those of the carpenter or the clerk, who receives twice the amount of his salary?

The relative standing of a man among strangers is usually estimated by his personal appearance; and his influence in his profession will be affected by the same things. Said a worthy minister of Boston some years ago, to a western agent: If you mean to get money for your college, you must wear a better coat. The hint was regarded, and it was found that the thirty-dollar coat obtained hundreds, where the cheap rusty one obtained tens and twenties. Whatever may be said about Christian economy, ministers should have the means of maintaining as good style in dress and equipage as those for whose benefit they labor.

IV. Justice requires that ministers should be paid like other men.

A man in any profession, in the practice of frugality, will find that his necessary expenses will bear some proportion to his relative talents for his work. There are some men who can live on a small salary, and in their profession they are small men, suited to a more limited sphere, and they should be paid according to what they do. The truly noble mind, that is by its own resources drawing from the deep mines of thought rich treasures, and scattering them broadcast for the benefit of the race, can not stoop to the calculation of how much he can expend for the necessaries of life without embarrassment; and he ought not, for his labors are above all price. In all professions, except the ministry, this distinction is made, in establishing the rate of compensation, while in a large majority of cases with the minister, the ability or habits of the people is made the standard of payment, instead of the amount and value of the service rendered. And as the result of this inequality, those who deal in small change, have change enough and can grow rich, while gems of the purest water, incrusted with the continual anxiety about worldly things, remain unpolished and unknown.

The parish have no more to do with the economy and thrift of the minister than of their carpenter or laborer. What should we think of our good sisters, if they were ever prying into the internal affairs of the families of the men who are employed by their husbands, to see if they use their money well, as if it were a gratuity which ought to be withheld if not properly used? They do not claim such a supervision. They allow all, except the minister's family, to manage their own affairs in their own way; and if it was understood that the minister was entitled to a remuneration for his service, there would be no complaints about his want of economy and thrift.

Ministers know how to use money, and they do use it, with at least as much economy as other men. There is not a class of men in the nation who live in as good style, dress as well, entertain as much company, and give so much to objects of Christian benevolence, with so limited means, as ministers of the Gospel, which they could not do without an equal share of frugality. The common remark that ministers do not know how to use money, is a base slander. When they have been driven, like Father Howe, "to neglect their own work to do the work of the people," they have almost invariably shown that they knew how to get a good living. And if they were paid a just compensation for the service rendered in each case, the sad fact would not have been recorded, that of over sixty widows of deceased ministers now living in this State, fifty-two were dependent on charitable aid the past year. Tell me not that ministers should live by faith, and be ready to leave their widows and fatherless children with God. We do it. He is our strong confidence in the hour of distress. We know by sweet experience that it is good to live by faith, and we do not distrust God, however unjust may be the almoners of his bounty. But, does not the Christian live under the same rule? Should he not with the same faith, ply his trade or sell his wares, and give all the avails of his labor and care to the cause of his Master, and not reserve even enough to build him a home to shelter his wife and children, lest his confidence in the divine promises should be impaired? Is not a life of poverty as conducive to the Christian's piety as to the minister's?

If those eminent Christians, a few of whom are still found scattered among our churches, who have so much to say about ministers living on faith, and the sin of large salaries, would try themselves to live on faith, perhaps they would come to the conclusion to which their pastors have often been driven, namely, that faith without works is dead, being alone. Whatever may be the minister's duty or his faith, it is the simple dictate of justice that ministers should, like other men, receive a compensation for the service rendered.

V. The system so prevalent, of supporting the minister as a gratuity, degrades the ministry in the estimation of the people, and tends to make the minister servile. When the minister is without any regular means of living, or if his salary is so small that he is obliged to estimate the favors he may receive as a part of his living, he can not feel independent, and he will of course desire to secure the good will of his people. It must be exceedingly hard for a poor minister, with a small salary and a large family, to preach unpalatable truth, with the reasonable expectation that it will bring his family to want. It is not marvelous that so many ministers are slow to rebuke popular sins; and that

man who told his pastor last spring, that if he ventured to preach on the subject of slavery, after having signed the great clerical protest, he should withhold his subscription, touched a tender, and often an effectual chord. When a merchant has sold goods to a minister at twenty per cent less than his usual price, because he is poor, and his salary small, he will not be so likely to hear a sermon on commercial honesty with profit; and when a parishioner makes his minister a handsome present, because he is poor, he expects some favor in return, and if the minister preaches against his peculiar sin, it seems very ungrateful.

I speak not of those delicate tokens of confidence and affection that so bind together the hearts of pastor and people; let them be increased many fold, but let them not be given so as to make the minister feel that they are a part of his compensation. Why should the minister depend on charitable contributions, more than those for whom he labors?

The expensiveness of a minister's labors to himself, its value to those who receive it, the influence of his compensation upon his reputation, the dictates of justice, and the influence of a support that depends at all upon charitable aid, in degrading the character and standing of the ministry; all make it the duty of the churches to give their ministers a just compensation for their services.

A few incidental remarks will close this discourse.

I. To avoid misapprehension, it is proper to say, that this discourse refers to the duty of churches in forming their estimate of a minister's claims; not of the minister's duty to preach, whether paid or not. Necessity, is laid upon him, he must preach the Gospel, but it does not follow that he must give his services to those who are able to pay him. If a parish is poor, and they can find a minister who can be just to his family and to all men, and give them services that in a more able parish would command six hundred dollars, for five, or even two hundred, it is right for him to do it, if the parish acknowledge the gift—for it is really a gift—as much as if he had paid the balance in money to enable them to hire other man. If my neighbor justly receives a salary of $800 for a given amount and quality of service, and I render an equal amount and quality of service for $600, do I not make a donation, in fact, of $200?

The minister's duty to God requires that he should preach the Gospel, even if he has to work with his hands to live while he preaches. The minister who will not preach to a people who can not otherwise have the Gospel, even if he has to make tents like Paul to furnish his bread, has not Paul's spirit. But it is no act of charity for a minister to give his time and strength to a people who are able to afford him a fair compensation, but will not do it. The minister is to devote his life to his work, and while he should

not be permitted, by the churches, to bear his own burdens, even in the most destitute plaees, he may, from the love he bears to Christ and the souls of men, give his time and mind to the work of his ministry without compensation, but it should be, in truly destitute places where the Gospel can not otherwise be preached and in such a field, the faithful minister would not leave a people when he is doing good, until manifestly called of God.

II. Ministers should preach to their own people on this subject. It is the pastor's duty to declare all the counsel of God to his people. If he withholds the truth, that shows how the Sabbath is to be regarded, can he expect his people to keep the Sabbath day holy? If he carefully refrains from any allusion to the sins respecting the seventh commandment, will not the youth of his flock have a great degree of laxness of morals in that direction, and from the deep volcanic fires pent up beneath them, will there not be occasional eruptions that will fill the beholder with wonder? And can they expect their people to correct the habits of generations, in this matter, without the preachings of that truth which establishes the rule by which they should act. And why should they not preach on this duty as well as others? Is it not clearly revealed? Surely, if pastors are ashamed of their message, or, if they are afraid to declare it, they ought to reap the fruit of their own doings. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable—that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And ministers should practice what they preach, and never be a party to the injustice of making their support a matter to be settled by the caprice, or the supposed ability of those who enjoy their labors; much less should they countenance the too common bait thrown before them, that the people "are in the habit of making their ministers a great many donations," and, "the merchants don't make any profit out of the minister's trade." Churches and ministers have been known to stipulate for a donation-party in the contract of settlement; but, when a free gift is made a matter of obligation, it usually comes very hard, and it would not be a new thing under the sun, if it should produce hard feelings on both sides, without any good results. A small share of instruction on this subject, connected with a corresponding course of action on the part of ministers, would secure all the reformation that can be desired. Our men of influence need only to have the matter properly laid before them, to feel the injustice of paying one thousand dollars to the clerk of the courts, or the cashier of the bank, when they pay their minister but six or seven hundred dollars.

III. Churches may not expect the rich effusion of divine grace,

while they do not aeknowledge their just obligations to their minister.

A fair compensation is an act of simple justice to their pastors, and how can they expect the blessing of God upon them, while they withhold it? If they are not able, with all that they can do, to give what justice requires, they can at least feel, and admit, their obligations to do more if it was in their power. I do not suppose that a church can be found, that has been made poorer by doing all that they could for the support of the house of God, while many a church has been made poor in temporal and spiritual things, by withholding what God would have them give for the cause of Christ. They did not bring all their tithes into the storehouse, and God has blown upon them. Their ships have been wrecked, their fisheries have failed, their debtors have been unable to pay, the wisdom and clear-sightedness that has gained them success at other times, has been obscured by the love of the world, till they have become careless, and they have earned wages to put it into a bag with holes. In spiritual things also they have forfeited the blessing of God, without which their labor must be unavailing, and though they may have been outwardly prospered and worldly thrift may have filled them with pride, sinners have not been converted, and a generation is now growing up in their midst, wise, it may be, in all that pertains to this world's good, but without God, and without hope.

IV. If the church that is able to pay a just compensation to their minister, does not, and will not do it, their minister should leave them. Why should he wear out his life in fruitless efforts to build up the church, while its members are dishonoring God by withholding his living? Let him go to some other place where he can have the coöperation of his people; or, if he must bear his own burdens, let him do it where it will have the merit of being an act of charity. The faithful minister will preach whether paid or not, but why should he throw his services away upon those who can not appreciate them, and who will not be profited by them? Let him labor, working with his own hands, rather than leave a poor parish where the people are benefited by his labors and do what they can to pay him. But, he should never forget, that "He that oppresseth the poor (minister) to increase his riches, and he who giveth (his services) to the rich, (parish,) shall alike come to want."

WHAT IS CONVICTION?

WHAT is conviction? It is a deep sense of guilt, without palliation and without excuse, and of danger so great and so threatening, that the soul can not rest while out of Christ. And now, my hearers, how many of you are utter strangers to such conviction? And what hope is there, that you will not continue thus? What means of conviction, that ever did or ever will produce the effect, have not been used with you in all their power? God has given you his Gospel, has unvailed his glories, has come to you in the full promulgation of his law, with all its requirements and sanctions. He has made known to you the Saviour in the fullness of his love and compassion, and his all-sufficiency to save. He has opened in bright display, the rewards of his favor in the purity, and bliss, and joys of the world above. He has told you of the darkness and despair, and the wailing and the woes of the pit. All the moral influence which the universe affords by mercy, by terror, by entreaty, by love, by the richest gift of benevolence, he has concentrated to a point, and poured it burning and blazing on your heart. And where are you? You have felt it—you could not help that. But, instead of yielding to it, and welcoming it into your heart and conscience, you have resisted it to the utmost. You are still resisting it. If slightly moved, still you maintain the firm posture of resistance, carrying still in your own bosom the sentence of condemnation. And now, if all this has been in vain—yea, if, in addition to all this, you have once and again passed through a revival of religion, and are even now living, and have for months lived, amid the displays of the power and glory of a present God—if he has here, before your eyes, been walking in these streets, and on every side of you multiplying the trophies of his love—if the dead, on your right hand and on your left, have heard the voice of God and lived, and you are yet unmoved, yet unconcerned in your rebellion against that God whose glories you behold—why, fellow-sinner, how can you ever expect to be awakened?

And now, my dear hearers, have you not long enough hated, and resisted, and shut out the light of truth? Remember, you can not always do thus. Soon will these days of hope be passed and gone forever. Soon will that light, which now shines to reveal a God of mercy, and to allure you to his friendship and love —that light, which discloses to the eye of guilt and crime, a Saviour entreating reconciliation, and proffering everlasting life—that light, which beams upon you from the eternal throne, softened and tempered by the cheering rays of love, to draw you to the bosom of God; soon, ah! soon, will this light of everlasting truth, show you to yourself, to the Judge, and the Judge to you, when there will be none to pity—none to save. Oh! if this light

of these days of mercy be insupportable to thy guilty soul—how will you bear the light of that day which shall show you an incensed God, and thyself under the just desert, and the hopeless doom of his wrath? If you are not willing to see and feel enough of your guilt and ruin as a sinner, to relent with contrition, and accept of mercy from thy offended God—oh! how can you endure the light that shall reveal a God that will never forgive—that shall reveal heaven as thy lost inheritance, and hell as thy final doom? How can you bear the light of that day, when the sentence of thy God shall echo in responsive thunder, the solemn "Amen. IT IS FINSIHED;" "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints;" "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments?"—DR. NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR.

PRACTICAL SERMONS. By NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D.D., Late Dwight Professor of Didactic Theology in Yale College. Pages 455: Sermons xxxii. New-York: Published by Clark, Austin & Smith. 1858.

THESE are memorable sermons. They will be had in everlasting remembrance by many now in heaven and many still on earth, who have been converted by the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon their instrumentality. We welcome their appearance, and commend them in earnest language to the attentive perusal of all. They are powerful discourses—redolent of weighty and solemn truths, plain, pungent, pointed, direct—burnished weapons, like the sword of the Spirit, flashing with celestial brightness. They are Pauline in their strength and logic and force of diction. They are not small arms from the great armory of truth; but heaven's heavy artillery, siege-guns constructed and designed by a skillful engineer, to do execution when brought to bear upon the citadel of sin in the hearts of men, and induce an immediate surrender to the rightful Sovereign. The Spirit of God honored them, made them effectual as weapons in the spiritual warfare in numerous cases through continuous years. We have heard most of them again and again uttered in impressive tones, and a deep yearning interest, from the lips of him who on earth will never utter them again. Preaching in the estimation of this man of God, was no fancy work, no commonplace affair, of a dull and sleepy intellect, and a careless, indifferent heart; but a great and solemn business doing and to be done for eternity, and worthy of the entire devotedness even of angelic minds. This earnest, impressive conviction of its transcendent importance, breathes through all these discourses. As such they are worthy the attentive perusal of all who, as preachers of the Gospel, are engaged in the most important and responsible of all business which can employ the human intellect and heart on earth.—ED. N. PREACHER.